WHIRRAKEE

August 2011 Vol. 32 No. 7

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

Office Bearers for 2010 - 2011

President	Jan Orr	5443 5668
Senior Vice President	Matthew Comer	0409 162627
Junior Vice President	*position vacant*	
Secretary	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Minute Secretary	Joy Clusker/Rod Orr	
Treasurer	Ben Goonan	
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	*position vacant*	
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	Diana Collier (an assistant is still required)	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	0409 162 627
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)	0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Stuart Fraser, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, Bill Holsworth, Bev Culvenor, John Lindner, Kerrie Norris.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: meets occasionally (by prior arrangement) in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5442 6188 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5442 6188.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club

Vol. 32, No. 7, August 2011

Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note: August is the time of remembering that all the work for the club is done by dedicated volunteers, and for some new people, hopefully to put their feet (or just their toes) in to help run it. A nomination form is enclosed and all committee positions are open. To see what positions are available, the inside cover of this magazine is s good guide. If not a formal position, then may be just joining the committee might be a first step. Be brave!
August is also the month of looking forward and getting a taste for spring. The spreading wattle has had a good year and is still fully in bloom, and being joined by many other species. Silky Hakea has already had its best days at the university bushland. It is a pity that the flowers do not last till the grevilleas are out, as they make a very good example flower for botany students when comparing bird- and insect pollination syndromes in the Proteaceae. Florally speaking, the next few weeks will be fantastic.

Front page photographer: Rod Orr
Two little Lepiotas (*Lepiota* sp.) growing amongst the lichens, mosses and rockferns at Mt Kooyoora. It looks as though they are struggling up into the light, but, of course that's not why they grow as tall as possible, because they don't photosynthesise. However, while positioning themselves to spread their spores, they would also be casting their shade on other smaller organisms that do use light for photosynthesis, especially mosses and lichens.

Short Notices

Koalas in the Whipstick

Peter Ellis submitted the following response after the article about a koala sighting in the Whipstick (reported in the last Whirrakee*)*

Leon Ruedin once reported that koalas were once in the northern Whipstick, i.e. either Kamarooka or Egerton Forest. I think he was referring to the gums that were along Round Creek. It's possible this is mentioned in the Bendigo Naturalist, or perhaps Leon's son Noel might know, or Rob Watkins?

14th Annual Project Hindmarsh Planting Weekend

Saturday & Sunday 20&21 August 2011

Project Hindmarsh is a major nature restoration and landscape project centred in the Wimmera/ Mallee region of Western Victoria. It focuses on the area between the Little and Big Desert National Parks. The project commenced in 1997 and numerous volunteers from all around Victoria have been involved planting trees each year since the project's inception, along with many from the local community. The weekend is based at the Little Desert Lodge near Nhill. The success of this project is exemplified by the winning the 2008 National Landcare award.

Information and Online Registration: http://www.hindmarsh.vic.gov.au/Page/page.asp?Page_Id=201&h=0

or ring Trevor Barker on 0429 006 936

Bendigo Advertiser, Saturday, September 17, 1859

Via Bill Holsworth

A COCKATOO SHEPHERD. – There is on this goldfield rather a remarkable bird of the cockatoo species, belonging to Mr. Duncan, the steam-puddler, in Shicer Gully. This bird's hobby is a fine flock of goats, which he regularly takes out to feed, and brings home at the appointed time; should any goat lag behind the herd his watchful eye at one espies the laggard, and soon his bill is felt at the heels of the delinquent, and should any goat attempt to go too much ahead, this sagacious bird soon stops his progress by a flip of his wing; at times when the feeding is not satisfactory to this shepherd's ideas, he collects his charge and wings his flight to a more favored spot, calling his flock after him, should rain appear, home he brings them - to take out again on the first appearance of sunshine. At times; however, the goats wish a gallop when cocky is not inclined to fly, he then indulges himself with a ride on the back of one of his favorites, whilst I have seen him drive away any strangers who wished to join his herd. – *N'Ivor News*.(sic McIvor)

Bendigo Creek Community Field Day

To celebrate Landcare Week and the value of Bendigo Creek, an often misunderstood water-way, everyone is invited to a field day on Sunday 11th September. Commencing at 9:30 at Leans Road Huntly, participants will enjoy a day of talks, walks and hands-on activities designed to raise awareness of the Bendigo Creek and contribute to restoration works.

Short talks will discuss the assets / threats and importance of the Bendigo Creek in the past, present and future by discussing the indigenous heritage, gold rush days, features of healthy riverine environments and the role of a creek that flows from a growing urban centre. Active sessions will include tree-planting, macro-invertebrate sampling and a walk to view and discuss the function of nest boxes. The afternoon will involve a bus tour visiting two significant sites downstream including Terrick Terrick National Park where Parks Victoria and the Northern Plains CMN manage native grasslands, maintain biolinks between the park and the Bendigo Creek and monitor Plains Wanderer populations. The tour will end where the Bendigo Creek does . . . at the nationally important wetland, Kow Swamp, to enjoy talks about the area, it's importance for native birds and it's role within the catchment.

....continued on back page

Winter views

Burgundy Wood Tubaria (*Tubaria rufofulva*) ↑ *(Photographer: Rod Orr)*

While walking at Mt Kooyora in early July, we found a particularly damp seepage where there were many interesting fungi, including these beauties. This fungus is also one of the Fungimap Target species, so I'll have to get organized and start sending in location records to their database.

We also found an unlucky New Holland Honeyeater that had got caught in an old orb-weavers net ↓

Codonocarpus cotinifolius Bell fruit or wheel fruit tree (see July Observations) *Photographer: Jane Clear*

Family Nature Club, Geology Excursion – the weather was a bit rough but participants were tough!
Photographer: Rod Orr

Eric Wilkinson (expedition leader, left) on top of the hill at an old gold-mining area – Well-rugged Family Nature Group members among the native vegetation & weeds

Roadside Geology - remnants of an Anticline ↓

Iron mineral staining and colour banding in sedimentary rocks

Sharp eyes find life everywhere…Bougainville's Skink (*Lerista bougainvillii*)

Pyrite crystals – almost completely weathered away - notice the square holes (the crystals are cubes)

Mineral staining of sedimentary rocks causes exquisite colour shades that look best in wet weather

(More) BFNC June Observations

compiled by Rod Orr

Matthew Comer, Jan Orr brought Echidna jaw and Dianne Davies' unknown nest. These were both passed around for inspection.

Jane Cleary A small flock (possibly 20) of Spine-tailed Swifts was seen on June 8, travelling North (mid-afternoon). The day was cloudy, cold & windy (from the South).

Pam Whiteley There have been Wombat sightings in Central Vic (occasional); Dead Tuans will be gratefully received for study (see write-up of Pam's talk, July Whirrakee)

Lyn Hamilton ~30 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos were seen

Glenise Moors (27/5) Silvereyes & a flock of ~20 White-fronted Chats were observed at the robin site. Flame Robins were there as well. Beak Deformities & leg problems, deformed feet & lumpy legs have all been observed in the wild population there.

Pam & John Land have noticed more Stubble Quail, Brown Quail, Painted Button-quail and some Little Button-quail in recent weeks (during May & early June). There were lots of groups at Bael Bael, around Kerang, Balra-nald and Barham recently and Painted Button-quail at Neilborough and through Kamarooka and the Whipstick.

Anne Bridley reported sightings from the Terrick Terrick National Park (8th June). In the southern section, A family of Hooded Robins (1 male, 1 female, 1 immature) at the Picnic Ground. Several Red-capped Robins were seen along tracks allowing them to approach quite closely. Jacky Winters were also seen. Small birds were plentiful around Mt Terrick Terrick.

July Observations

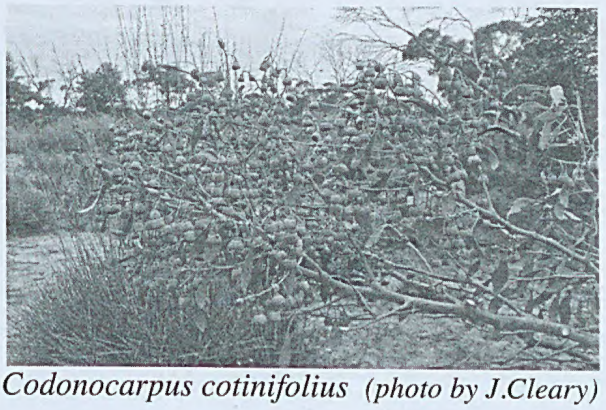
Jan Orr A trapped Honeyeater was found (dead) in an Orb-weaver's web at Mt Kooyoora (see page 4). During a recent visit to the Kamarooka, a Hooded Robin, Flame Robins & a Red-capped Robin were seen.

Anne Bridley 30 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos were seen on July 6th at 7:45am flying over the South end of Carpenter Street, Spring Gully. Swift Parrots were also heard flying overhead, from North to South at about 7:45am on July 13th.

Glenise Moors 2 male Flame Robins appeared in the Moors' backyard (10:45), 2 Grey Fantails, Brown Thornbills, a Silvereye, several Pardalotes, both Spotted & Striated, a female Scarlet Robin, male & female Scarlet Robins both appeared together later, male Flame Robin, Yellow-rumped Thornbills returned the next morning with Brown-headed Honeyeaters & Yellow Thornbills

Jane Cleary has seen Wanderer Butterflies on 2 occasions recently, on warm, sunny days, & wonders where they could be resting during the colder days. Noisy Friarbirds were in her garden on June 28th. Striated Pardalotes were very active on frosty, sunny mornings at their nest boxes. 30 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos were also seen on several occasions - June 27th, 29th,, July 2nd and several days following .

Jane had also seen the Bellfruit tree (*Codonocarpus cotinifolius*, Gyrostemnaceae) recently, in the Hattah-Mildura area (near the 495 km post from Bendigo on the East side of the Calder Highway). These trees germinate following fire, as does the closely related Buck-bush, the Eastern Wheel-fruit (*Gyrostemnon australasicus*). Both plants seem to prefer red sandy soil and are short-lived once the mallees regrow after burning. There were also numerous red galls on the Bellfruit trees (see below and also on page 5)



Codonocarpus cotinifolius (photo by J.Cleary)

Jane also brought to the meeting, an Austral Doubah fruit (*Marsdenia rostrata*, Aslepiadaceae) from the well-established vine found growing alongside Bendigo Creek at White Hills. This plant occurs naturally much further North in the far North-west of Victoria and in the Mallee areas of inland NSW.

When Jane visited Ducks-foot Lagoon recently (adjacent to Kings Billabong, Mildura) the following birds were seen: 2 Bluebilled Ducks, male & female Marsh Harriers beside a large Red Gum containing a nest (close to the Bird Hide), Regent Parrots (at Lake Hattah also).

Pam & John Land Lots of Australian Grebes are about at the moment, mostly singles and pairs on local dams around Neilborough, but 7 were seen on one dam. A pair of Wedgetailed Eagles were also seen daily around Neilborough recently. Numerous Flame, Scarlet & Red-capped Robins were seen in the Whipstick, especially along Rifle Range Road.

And another one...

Anne Speechley has seen a Buff Banded Rail in their garden twice in the last 2 weeks, and she also saw a Painted Quail on the nature strip outside Medibank on 26th July in Queen Street, unconcerned about passerbys. Roy has seen a dead Painted Quail on the roadside in Strathfieldsaye and both have heard them from time to time.
A flock of up to 50 Yellow Tailed Black Cockatoos has been seen by Anne and Roy on two separate occasions in the local Strath area and Anne observed two small groups meet over the White hills shops, hover, calling loudly greeting each other then go their separate ways.
While driving recently Anne also came across a large group of Musk Lorikeets gathered on the roadway around a dead flock member. She very nearly ran over them before they moved, as it was hard to see on a rainy day. They were loathed to move on, so she moved the dead bird of the road.

Family Nature Club - Geology of the White Hills - Leader: Eric Wilkinson

By Rod Orr

Our faithful and ever reliable gang of interested and enthusiastic helpers arrived at the meeting place nice and early, and then we waited to see whether anyone else would turn up to be shown some of the interesting aspects of Bendigo's geology that Eric was prepared to demonstrate and explain to us all - it was cold and wet - a thoroughly miserable morning, after all!

We need not have worried about this as, despite the very unpromising weather, several families did attend and we were able to start our activity on time.

Eric explained some of the geological features of the White Hills landform by referring to a geological map of Bendigo on which he had mapped many of the interesting details surrounding us.

We crossed the road without incident and examined the roadside geology, which Eric explained to us all. The damp, dull morning weather proved to be absolutely ideal for taking photographs and also for collecting samples of the coloured clay. Most of us simply accumulated this on our boots and clothing although some interesting clay balls were carefully moulded and taken home afterwards by a few children. Of course, sharp eyes soon discovered a little lizard which Anne Bridley identified for the finder as Bougainville's Skink (*Lerista bougainvillii*) - a description and photograph is on Page 45 of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club's book, *Frogs and Reptiles of the Bendigo District*.

Eric explained how these soft rocks had been formed millions of years ago deep in the ocean, as layers of fine sediment, and how they were compressed into thin layers which were folded and buckled by massive earth movements to eventually form the layers of Sedimentary rock that we were looking at.

We were all told the names of these upward and downward folds - Anticlines, and Synclines - and the intriguing names that some examples had been given by the earlier residents of this area, for example, the Slaughterhouse Anticline.

Next, we looked for examples of crystal deposits in the sedimentary rocks and found many good examples of Pyrites showing the cubical shape of its crystals. Most of these crystals had weathered away because of their exposure to air and water (we know a little bit what this felt like because of the weather!) and now just appeared as rusty looking lumps in the rocks or sometimes as square-edged holes showing where the Pyrites crystals had been (see page 7 for a photo).

The striking red, brown and yellow colours, that were already being appreciated by some children for their potential as coloured ochre, result from minerals, mainly iron compounds, which are present in the rocks (see photos on pages 6-7). Some of these coloured chemical compounds are able to dissolve in rainwater and form coloured bands in the rocks. Rob Moors explained how the children could investigate this process by using one end of a strip of blotting paper to soak up colour from some coloured water made with a water-soluble Texta Pen. Colours which have been mixed to produce the colour in the pen are able to separate into different coloured bands as they soak up into the strip of blotting paper. Many naturally occurring vegetable extracts also behave in this way and are able to form separate bands of different colours on blotting paper.

We walked up onto the remnants of the White Hills Gold-mining area and carefully avoided the many holes, which had been left by the miners (see photo on page 5). At the top of the rise, Eric explained the inverted nature of the landscape. We were standing on (in) the ancient bed of the Bendigo River, which had formed the rounded quartz pebbles that made the soil so rough and difficult to walk over. The tall hills which had surrounded this ancient river valley had all eroded away over millions of years of weathering - we were asked to imagine what it would have looked like back then. Eric had asked the group about the special feature of the mine holes left by Chinese gold-miners and we had a brief but interesting discussion about which explanation - 'miners were avoiding dark corners where Evil Spirits could lurk', or 'rounded holes were safer because they were less prone to collapse', was more likely to be true.

There was also time for us to notice some of the native plants which grow surprisingly well in this difficult clay and gravel soil and also, unfortunately, several introduced plants which grow there as weeds - Boneseed is an example of an introduced plant which grows very well in these soil conditions.

Several of the native birds which live amongst these shrubby plants flew around us and many others could be heard calling while we were concentrating on the geology and plant life of the area.

Jan thanked Eric for showing us around and explaining what we were walking over. She also thanked the resilient and weatherproof members of the Family Nature Club for coming despite the weather. We all experienced various aspects of the environment - Geology, Native Vegetation, Introduced Weeds, Native Birdlife, and Wintery Weather - all at the same time in this very interesting area of Bendigo, the White Hills.

Eric also offered to take us Fossil Hunting to find Graptolites, but in another area of Bendigo and during warmer weather because there is a lot of sitting down and careful searching involved. We will certainly accept his kind offer and will work out when this will happen.

Annual Friends of Terrick Terrick NP Open Weekend, Friday, Saturday & Sunday 30 September, 1&2 October 2011.
Information: Keith Stockwell
stocky@mcmedia.com.au or 5480 9254

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

Wednesday, August 10 7.30pm
Emeritus Professor Sam Lake, School of Biological Sciences, University of Melbourne: 'The ecology of stream restoration'

Wednesday, September 14 7.30pm
Ass. Prof. Raoul Mulder, Dept of Zoology, Uni of Melbourne: 'The My Swan project'

Wednesday, October 12 7.30pm
Carolyn Hall, 'A Touch Of Ice - Spitsbergen & Greenland 2010'.

Wednesday, November 9 7.30pm
Jeff Jeanes, National Herbarium. 'The Victorian Conservation Seedbank Project'

'Naturally Loddon' A Wonderland in Spring Festival 1 September to 2 October
Program includes photography exhibitions, walks, tours of wetlands and environmental iconic sites.
Highlights: Kooyoora Wildflower Show Saturday 17 to Sunday 17 Sept., Rheola Hall Friends of Terrick Terrick open weekend Friday 30 September to Sunday 2 October
For brochure or further infomation: www.loddon.vic.gov.au or ph 54954 3489
N.B. The Bendigo *Towards Reconciliation* group, is planning an excursion to Boort on Sept. 3 or 4. Please contact Diana Collier on 5443 0137, if you are interested in joining.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Bendigo Native Plant Group are holding a **Native Plant Flower Show** on Saturday 3rd & Sunday 4th September
Saturday: 9am - 5pm, Sunday 9am – 4pm.
At Rotary Hall, Gateway Park, High Street, Kangaroo Flat, Bendigo

For more information, contact President Ian Evans Phone 5446-7326
Email ianevanslandscapes@bigpoond.com.au

Bendigo Creek Community Field Day
Continued form page 3…
…this is a child-friendly free event, with snacks and lunch provided and a take home bag of resources and information about the topics covered. Bookings are essential. To RSVP for the morning creekside session, the afternoon bus tour or both or to receive more detailed information, please contact Nicole Howie 5448 8244 / dnhowie@bigpond.com by Wednesday 7th September

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From chemical soup to dazzling gemstones

In celebration of National Science Week 2011, Dermot Henry, Manager Natural Science Collections, Museum Victoria explores the origins of minerals and crystals found in central Victoria, which help us understand the rich chemistry of the Earth.
Tuesday 16 August 6:00-8:00pm
The Foundry Hotel 366 High Street, Bendigo
The talk is free and food and beverages are available at bar prices. Please register your interest at vgin@museum.vic.gov.au

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Ringwood Field Naturalists Club 50th Birthday Luncheon

Sunday 25th September
11:30 to noon for 12:30 lunch
Karralyka Centre, Mines Rd, Ringwood
cost $35 per head RSVP: by 9 September
contact: Peter or Alllison Roger, ph 9801 6946.